

Press Release

The *Nobel Family in Russia* exhibition was organized by Gumanistika Group of Companies. The bulk of research was completed in Humanistica Joint-Stock Company (St. Petersburg, project overseen by Professor A. Melua). Most organizing work in Finland was done at Humanistica OY in Helsinki (project overseen by Heikki Lahelma). Work in this area has been carried out over a period of more than 20 years, involving hundreds of organizations in Russia and other countries. To collect and analyze information effectively, a computer-based information system was created. The size of the database is over 100 Terabyte and keeps growing. This exhibition presents a small part of the work completed.

Most of the materials presented at the exhibition pertain to the period from mid-19th century to 1917. Since the 1980s we have been cooperating on this project with the Nobel Prize institutions in accordance with the Declaration, signed by the President of the Nobel Foundation in 1990-1991. We have thoroughly researched several hundreds of Russian and foreign organizations, whose history or activities were associated with the business of the Nobel Family. These companies, including St. Petersburg Arsenal Plant and Obukhovskiy Plant, Kolomna Machine-Building Plant, Izhevsk Arms Factory, and the Kyiv Arsenal and many other companies have been leaders of the Russian economy from the 19th century to the present day.

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Some of the events in the second half of the 19th century had played a crucial role in the direction of the country's social development. Despite many military conflicts of that era, most significant achievements were made in the civil sector. These developments were based on emergence of new fundamental ethical and cultural values exercised by all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, or religion. Many family clans stood by such views. One of these families was the family of the Nobels, talented engineers. The family came from Sweden to Finland, and then from there to Russia in the 19th century. It was in Russia's socio-cultural environment that their talents blossomed and were put to good use by the Russian society.

History has known many other families of inventors and designers. However, the Nobel family is one of the very few whose innovative work became a global phenomenon, encompassing all classes of the population, almost all sectors of the economy, finance, industry, science, art and culture.

Not only in Russia but also in other countries the Nobel Family became known due to the work of Alfred Nobel, who created dynamite and designed its production process. After he died, he bequeathed all of his money to the Nobel Foundation. His will was enforced to the fullest. Work of other members of the Nobel family has not been sufficiently covered even in Russia or Sweden. We need to look at the legacy of other members of the Nobel Family because of the great public value of their work. The amount of work done by the Nobels has been confirmed by tens of thousands of documents in Russia and other countries, which have not yet been systematized. They have been stored in governmental and public collections, archives, libraries, and in personal collections of many families whose ancestors had worked for companies belonging to the Nobels.

By the end of the 19th century there were about 100 people related to the Nobel family through their historical and genealogical roots. Working in various industries in different countries, they collaborated on many projects, making their family a historical phenomenon and carrier of high moral principles.

Some of them received Russian citizenship, while others eventually went to live in Finland, France and other countries. It was that atmosphere that helped shape the views of Alfred Nobel.

Today, when, in the words of Academician Vladimir Vernadsky, "ideas became planetary phenomena, and the human mind became a geological force," and the noosphere emerged, moral evaluation of outstanding technological achievements gained vital importance. All inventors must comprehend the role of their inventions in society, and their place in preserving and developing humankind. This struggle often takes place inside the human mind, in the person's conscience and soul. Alfred Nobel went along a difficult moral path of internal struggle: the inventor of the most powerful explosive of that time decided to fight against the forces that could use his invention against humanity. He bequeathed his capital not to development of the technology of explosives but to reward work for peace and science. After nearly 100 years, at the end of the twentieth century, another talented scholar, creator of an even more destructive kind of weaponry - Andrey Sakharov - made a conscious decision to fight against his own invention, the atomic bomb.

To provide for a fuller picture of the history of the Nobels, the authors of various studies dedicated to the Nobel family sought to consider their lives in the light of this worldview. In the 1990s there emerged volunteer teams in many cities that examined the heritage of the Nobels. The work done in St. Petersburg proved to be most productive due to cooperation with Nobel scientific institutions, which were set up in accordance with the agreements between Swedish and Soviet diplomats, and were subsequently developed by leading scholars and researchers of Nobel institutions.

This was the first attempt to summarize various data coming from more than 40 cities of Russia in the archives and industrial funds. The research found that the fate of the Nobel family had been intertwined with Russian industry and biographies of major Russian entrepreneurs throughout the second half of the 19th century. Ludwig Nobel worked tirelessly on improving Russian industry (as is obvious from the published documents of the Nobel family), and anyone who reads these documents will undoubtedly conclude that this Swedish businessman was a true patriot of Russia. The scope and ambition of his plans is still impressive even in the early 21st century. The methodological approaches he suggested are still valid today. His son, Emanuel Lyudwigovich Nobel, a prominent Russian industrialist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, worked closely with leading politicians and scientists from Russia, Finland, Sweden and other countries.

There was a true galaxy of famous families who in St. Petersburg and Moscow at that time. Nobel, Mendeleev, Oldenburg, Dostoevsky, Tillander, Tolstoy, Witte, Bolin, Mechnikov, Stolypin, Pavlov, Pirogov, Diaghilev, Melnikov, Struve, Putilov, Faberge, Krylov, and many others have remained in our time and our memory today as creators in various fields of everlasting value. On the one hand, our goal was to systematize the results of the work done by the Nobels. The exhibition provides a conceptual classification of these results. On the other hand, we wanted at least to outline the circle of friends of the Nobels family at the time. The exhibition discusses several hundred people in the close circle of the Nobels. It is clear why Alfred Nobel's library contained books by Leo Tolstoy. The exhibition provides a new look at correspondence between Leo Tolstoy and Bertha Suttner. The Nobels worked on setting up libraries for their workers in industrial towns, and their motives and principles in this area commands respect. Their inventions were surprising and witty. However, their most significant contributions were in large part due to the cultural environment of their innovative activities. It is in that sphere that engineers were motivated not to create weapons of war but work to protect life, progress and peace.

They not only held abstract ideas of European unity and cooperation. In co-operation of specialists of different countries, in free movement of machinery and designs, they implemented the principle of

European cooperation. The Nobels were the first to create a network of petroleum product transportation, which today is one of the components in the European energy program.

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The research project on the Nobels Family in Russia is humanitarian in nature. However, recognizing the high value of moral principles in life and work of the Nobel family, the research project also seeks to systematize various innovations offered by the Nobels in engineering. This work has allowed to fill in the gaps in the recent history of entrepreneurship in Europe.

The database of documents on industrial activities of the Nobel family is primarily based on documents in collections and archives, public and private enterprises and libraries. Their engineering inventions have been described in detail in patents and projects (of machinery, instruments, equipment, ships, etc.) and in methodological publications. The Nobels had not only actively patented their inventions but also conducted a range of publishing activities. This work was required due to there being numerous branches of Nobel enterprises set up throughout the extensive territory of Russia. The exhibition presents a map of Russia with hundreds of towns where Nobel enterprises were located. Another hundred of enterprises (plants, labs, etc.) was set up by Alfred Nobel abroad: these companies developed and produced dynamite and related products for its use. Alfred Nobel was a shareholder in his brothers' Russian enterprises. Wherever they worked, their employees had to comply with a set of corporate requirements. These requirements were established in books and brochures published by the Nobels. Uniform standards were necessary to assure efficiency of their business. We are currently working on completing digitization of books published by the Nobels. A part of this collection can be seen on computer screens at this exhibition.

The Nobels have also worked on social and economic innovations, initiating reforms of tariff policies, export and import management, industrial financing, etc. The Nobels have made a significant contribution to establishing the metric system in Russia.

The Nobels had used various financial instruments. The shares of their companies were trusted on financial markets of Russia and other countries. The Nobels had owned shares in other companies, including businesses abroad.

As owners of large industrial enterprises, Nobels had paid considerable attention to training. They established scholarships for various educational institutions, organized libraries and schools.

Their social policy followed several important causes, such as funding hospitals, establishing savings banks for workers, building houses for employees, and setting up parks and other recreational facilities.

As we organized the first Nobel Family in Russia exhibition, we did not seek to answer all the questions on their activities. In our understanding, the exhibition's main goal was to show the breadth of their interests, the noble nature of their ideas, and the importance of their research even today. The exhibition is a way for us to introduce less known or unknown documents on life and work of the Nobels. Since the 1990s we have been working on biographic encyclopedias, and since 2009 – a series of monographs entitled "Documents on Life and Activities of the Nobel Family." In the next several years we plan to publish *The Nobels*, a multi-volume encyclopedia.

The history of the Nobel Family in the 19th century, and the persona of Alfred Nobel are the topics that define the entirety of historical and scholarly topics within the scope of this project. A study of works by Nobel laureates is not a part of this project as there are many other papers on this topic worldwide.

However, we have also published some general monographs dedicated to Nobel laureates (Ivan Pavlov, Ilya Mechnikov, Vasily Leontiev and others). These books are on display, and can be borrowed in Russian-language collections in major libraries worldwide. These individual monographs confirm the progressive nature of all projects and results achieved by the Nobel family.

Professor A. I. Melua,
Exhibition Curator